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ELECTION '76: THE LABOR VOTE
(INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR:

IN ELECTION YEARS, POLITICIANS AND POLITICAL COMMENTATORS PAY A GREAT DEAL OF ATTENTION TO THE VARIOUS GROUPS THAT MAKE UP THE AMERICAN ELECTORATE. EACH GROUP HAS ITS OWN LABEL, SUCH AS THE FARM VOTE, THE JEWISH VOTE, THE CATHOLIC VOTE, BIG BUSINESS AND BIG LABOR. IN THIS SPECIAL VOA REPORT, CHARLES MEDD LOOKS AT HOW ORGANIZED LABOR IS PREPARING FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION.

TAPE: CUT ONE (MEANY)

"WE ARE HERE TO HELP ELECT GOVERNOR JIMMY CARTER AND SENATOR WALTER MONDALE ... (APPLAUSE)" (FADE UNDER).

VOICE:

GEORGE MEANY, THE AGING PRESIDENT OF THE AFL-CIO, GIVING LABOR ITS ELECTION-YEAR MARCHING ORDERS, SHORTLY AFTER THE GIANT UNION FEDERATION VOTED TO SUPPORT THE DEMOCRATIC TICKET OF CARTER AND MONDALE.

TAPE (BRING UP GRADUALLY)" ... AMERICAN NEEDS THEM; WE NEED THEM AND WE ARE GOING TO HELP THEM IN EVERY WAY WE CAN."

VOICE:

HELP FROM THE AFL-CIO WILL COME FROM THE COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL EDUCATION, KNOWN BY THE ACRONYME COPE, WHICH IS CONDUCTING WHAT LABOR CALLS ITS BIGGEST POLITICAL CAMPAIGN EVER. THE UNIONS HAVE MADE SIMILAR PROMISES IN THE PAST, NOT ALL OF THEM LIVED UP TO, LEADING TO THE CHARGE THAT LABOR IS A KIND OF POLITICAL PAPER TIGER. BUT BECAUSE OF THIS YEAR'S ECONOMIC ISSUES, COPE'S PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTOR, BEN ALBERT, IS OPTIMISTIC.

TAPE: CUT TWO (ALBERT)

"THERE MUST BE FEW WORKERS IN AMERICA TODAY WHO FEEL PERFECTLY SECURE IN THEIR EMPLOYMENT. THEY'RE VERY WISE PEOPLE. THEY CAN SEE THAT THERE ARE POLICIES WORKING AGAINST THEM, AGAINST THEIR BROTHER AND SISTER WORKERS, THAT HAVE CREATED SUBSTANTIALLY HIGHER UNEMPLOYMENT THAN THEY'VE EXPERIENCED IN THEIR LIFETIME."

VOICE:

MORE THAN TWENTY MILLION AMERICANS CARRY UNION CARDS, AND JUST UNDER THREE-QUARTERS OF THEM BELONG TO UNIONS AFFILIATED WITH THE AFL-CIO. COPE'S JOB IS TO "EDUCATE" THE MEMBERS ABOUT THE ISSUES, AND TO PERSUADE THEM NOT JUST TO VOTE BUT HOW TO VOTE. BETWEEN NOW AND ELECTION DAY, AMERICAN WORKERS AND THEIR FAMILIES WILL BE THE TARGET OF A LITERAL DELUGE OF UNION MESSAGES.

TAPE: CUT THREE (ALBERT)

"I WOULD GUESS, AND I FEEL PRETTY SAFE IN DOING IT, THAT WE WILL HAVE GENERATED BY NOVEMBER SECOND EIGHTY TO ONE HUNDRED MILLION MESSAGES TO UNION MEMBERS URGING THEM TO VOTE FOR JIMMY CARTER FOR PRESIDENT."

VOICE:

BEN ALBERT'S JOB, AT COPE HEADQUARTERS IN WASHINGTON, IS TO GET OUT OF THE WORD. IN EACH OF THE FIFTY STATES, WHERE COPE OFFICIALS ARE ALSO AT WORK, THE JOB IS TO GET OUT THE VOTE. AMONG THE MORE CRITICAL STATES IS HEAVILY INDUSTRIAL PENNSYLVANIA -- WHERE ABOUT ONE-FOURTH OF THE VOTING POPULATION BELONGS TO UNIONS. A NEW STATE LAW, ENACTED AT LABOR'S URGING ENABLES THE PEOPLE OF PENNSYLVANIA TO REGISTER -- THAT IS, TO BECOME ELIGIBLE VOTERS -- BY MAIL. ERWIN ARONSON, A COPE OFFICIAL IN HARRISBURGH, BELIEVES THE NEW MAIL REGISTRATION LAW COULD BRING THE POTENTIAL LABOR VOTE IN PENNSYLVANIA TO OVER ONE MILLION. BUT, SAYS ARONSON, THE BIG QUESTION IS WHAT HAPPENS ON ELECTION DAY.

TAPE: CUT FOUR (ARONSON)

"THE BOTTOM LINE OF THIS THING IS WHAT WE HAVE IN TERMS OF TURN-OUT ON ELECTION DAY, AND (PAST) EVIDENCE INDICATES TO US THAT UNION MEMBERS TURN OUT IN MUCH GREATER NUMBERS AND MUCH GREATER PERCENTAGES THAN DOES THE GENERAL PUBLIC. WE FEEL VERY HOPEFUL AND VERY CONFIDENT THAT THE IMPACT OF OUR CAMPAIGN WILL BE ALL THE MUCH GREATER BECAUSE OF THE APATHY (TOWARD THE ELECTION) OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC."

VOICE:

IN MOST ELECTION YEARS, LABOR GENERATES A LARGE PART OF ITS POLITICAL ACTIVITY AMONG THE INDUSTRIAL UNIONS, SUCH AS PENNSYLVANIA'S STEELWORKERS AND COALMINERS. FAR LESS ACTIVE IN THE PAST HAVE BEEN THE MORE CONSERVATIVE AND BETTER PAID MEMBERS OF THE BUILDING TRADES. BUT WITH THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY MIRED IN RECESSION, BUILDING TRADESMEN ARE ANGRY AT THE FORD ADMINISTRATION. THIS ANGER HAS CONVERTED MANY OF THEM INTO POLITICAL ACTIVISTS. FOR EXAMPLE, CRAIG IRWIN, AN ELECTRICIAN IN HARRISBURGH, NOW A COPE VOLUNTEER:

TAPE: CUT FIVE (IRWIN)

"RIGHT NOW I'M TAKING A WEEK OFF FROM WORK TO DO VOLUNTARY WORK HERE. WHY? THE BIGGEST REASON I CAN SEE IS, IN THE PAST, I'VE BEEN UNEMPLOYED FOR CONSIDERABLE AMOUNTS OF TIME, AND I THINK IT'S MUCH BETTER TO LOSE A SHORT AMOUNT OF TIME VOLUNTARILY NOW THAN TO BE FORCED OUT OF WORK LATER ON BECAUSE OF ADMINISTRATION POLICIES, BECAUSE OF WHAT THEY'VE BEEN AND WHAT THEY WILL BE."

VOICE:

THE AFL-CIO IS CONVINCED THAT A DEMOCRATIC ADMINISTRATION WILL PAY MORE ATTENTION TO GETTING AMERICANS BACK TO WORK THAN THE REPUBLICANS. AND THE JOB OF THE COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL EDUCATION IS TO CONVINCE UNION MEMBERS THAT A CARTER VICTORY IS IMPORTANT TO THEM, AS BEN ALBERT POINTS OUT:

TAPE: CUT SIX (ALBERT)

"ALL WE CAN DO IS TRY. WE CAN'T DRAG PEOPLE TO THE VOTING BOOTHS; WE DON'T WANT TO. WE HOPE WE CAN CONVINCE THEM THAT IT'S IMPORTANT TO THEM, THAT THEIR WELL-BEING AND THEIR FAMILY SECURITY DEPEND ON THEIR VOTING. OUR STRENGTH IS NOT THE STRENGTH OF COMPULSION; WE DON'T WANT THAT. IT'S THE STRENGTH OF ACCESS."

VOICE:

COPE HAS DIRECT ACCESS TO NEARLY FIFTEEN MILLION UNION MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES -- THE LARGEST SINGLE VOTING BLOC IN THE UNITED STATES. AND WITH CURRENT POLLS POINTING TO A CLOSE ELECTION AND THE POSSIBILITY OF A LOW TURNOUT BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC, THE STRENGTH OF THE LABOR VOTE LOOMS LARGER, AND MAY WELL BE DECISIVE.

////EDITORS; NOTE: THIS IS THE SECOND REPORT IN A SPECIAL SEVEN-PART SERIES WE PLAN ON THE COMING NATIONAL ELECTION. EACH WILL DISCUSS ISSUES, VOTING BLOCS AND REGIONS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF A SPECIFIC LOCALE. THEY WILL MOVE ON THE NCA WIRE, APPROXIMATELY ONE A WEEK, AND WILL BE FOR USE ANYTIME UNTIL THE ELECTION. ////

PBM